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Proposed Senate Bills 801 and 803
Transportation Committee
Senator Kevin Kelly
February 18, 2011

Good Morning Chairmen Maynard and Guerrera, Ranking Members Boucher and Scribner. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify in support of *Senate Bill 801, An Act Concerning a Study to Increase Mass Transit and Rail Usage in Fairfield County* and *Senate Bill 803, Act Concerning Train Service on the Waterbury Line*.

The intention of these proposals is to make public transportation a more attractive option, both for Metro North commuters and for current drivers who endure the congestion on I-95, the Merritt Parkway, and Route 8.

Senate Bill 801 would require the Department of Transportation to explore methods of increasing and promoting mass transit. Any commuter will tell you the current public transportation system contains both strengths and weaknesses. Identifying those weaknesses and finding ways to alleviate them is critical to promoting increased use of public transit. Some examples of ways to accomplish this include the use of double-decker rail cars, employer incentives to increase employee use and improved shuttle service from rail and bus stations to employer locations.

Increasing usage of mass transportation in Connecticut is dependent upon our ability to offer a convenient alternative to driving. Metro North train usage is extremely high for Connecticut residents traveling to and from New York City for two reasons. First, it is more convenient than driving because you can get anywhere from Grand Central Station by taxi, subway, or bus. Second, it is less expensive than driving and parking. However, the same conveniences are not available to in-state commuters. Once they get to their destination stations there is no convenient way for them to get to their office unless their business provides a shuttle.

Senate Bill 803 would increase the number and frequency of trains running on the Waterbury line, and would add stops in Seymour, Shelton and Derby, easing the congestion on Route 8. Again, this measure addresses the issue of convenience. The status of the Waterbury line, which has been temporarily suspended, demonstrates the pressing need to pass this bill. As you know, the cars have been transferred to the New Haven line due to a lack of operable cars. This is a huge inconvenience to commuters who depend on this service and could have been avoided if more cars were available.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify before you this morning. I believe that these small steps will lead to significant improvements in our public transportation system, and I urge the committee's favorable consideration.